

# **\*\*ATTENTION\*\***

*This document is provided for historical purposes only.*

*Documents contained in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Document & Publication Archive may contain dated and/or incorrect information. The WDFW Document & Publication Archive is provided as a service to those interested in the history of fish and wildlife management in Washington State.*

2/91

## **Mountain Goat**

*Oreamnos americanus*

### **Range:**

Found in many of the mountainous areas of western North America, from southeastern Alaska to south central Washington in the coastal ranges, and in the interior as far south as central Idaho and western Montana in the Rocky Mountains (Johnson 1983).

### **Washington Distribution:**

Found in the Cascade, Selkirk, and Olympic Mountains (Johnson 1983). Most goats in Washington are found in the Cascades from the Canadian border south to Mount Adams.

### **Habitat Requirements:**

Mountain goats occupy diverse habitats but nearly all are appropriately described by physiographic criteria. These features include steep, rocky cliffs, projecting pinnacles, ledges, and talus slides. Goats tend to spend much of their life in small, localized, highly preferred niches with these habitats. Mountain goats tend to prefer the narrow band of habitat near treeline in both the very wet forested areas of western Washington, and the dry open areas of eastern Washington. Migration patterns and distances vary considerably; some migrations are very short, while in other areas goats may migrate from 16-24km (10 to 15 mi.) or more to find suitable summer and winter habitat (Johnson 1983).

Winter range is characterized by steep, rocky sites with slopes more than 40 degrees close to diverse forage and cover. The most preferred areas do not accumulate more than 0.6m (2') of snow because of the steep slopes, low elevation, and aspect. East and southwest slopes are preferred, with dense conifer stands utilized for thermal cover (Johnson 1983). Summer ranges occupy large areas, and are usually not a limiting factor. Escape terrain is a critical component of both winter and summer ranges. Mountain goats are dependent on rock-cliff habitats to escape from predators, especially when offspring are young (Johnson 1983).

### **Limiting Factors:**

Human disturbance tends to push goats into the more remote areas. Goats avoid areas with heavily used trails (Sachet 1988).

Goats need early plant successional communities near steep, rocky cliffs, projecting pinnacles, ledges, and an occasional talus slide. Winter ranges are steep, rocky sites with slopes of 40 degrees or more close to diverse forage and cover (Johnson 1983).

Goats prefer the narrow band of habitat near treeline and seek the thermal cover of conifer stands or caves during periods of inclement weather. Mosses and lichens as well as evergreen needles provide some forage during extended storm periods (Johnson 1983). These are starvation forage items, however, and goats cannot survive for extended periods on these foods.

#### Management Recommendations:

Retain 30 to 50 percent of goat summer ranges in escape cover patches of 4-8 ha (10 to 20 acres). Retain more than 50 percent of goat winter range in thermal cover areas of more than 14 ha (36 acres) each. Discourage human use and vehicle traffic on and off roads and trails November 1 to June 30 within 1.6km (1 mi.) of winter range. Retain conifers in an unmanaged condition 90m (300') directly above and below cliffs used by mountain goats. Retain cover in travel corridor between cliffs used by mountain goats. Maintain goat forage areas in vigorous conditions through burning or seeding native herbs. Restrict livestock grazing in goat habitat.

#### References:

Johnson, Rolf L. 1983. Mountain Goats and Mountain Sheep of Washington. Washington State Game Department. Biol. Bull. No. 18. 196 pp.

Sachet, Glen A. 1988. Wildlife Evaluation Processes for ORV, Hiking, and Horse Backcountry Recreation Use in Washington Forests. Washington Department of Wildlife. 87 pp.

#### Key Points:

##### Habitat Requirements:

- Early plant successional communities.
  - Adjacent or nearby precipitous escape terrain.
  - Thermal cover on winter ranges and escape cover on summer ranges.
  - Freedom from disturbance one-quarter mile from escape terrain
- year-round and minimize disturbance within one mile during November through the end of June.

#### Management Recommendations:

- Retain escape and thermal cover patches in goat range.
- Maintain native forage in openings.
- Restrict livestock grazing.
- Minimize disturbance within one mile seasonally.